Thoughts on Research Trends in American Folkloristics:  
An Analysis of the 2013 Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society  

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ABSTRACT  

The American Folklore Society is an association of folklorists who study and communicate knowledge about folklore. The definition of “folklore” has broadened over time from the items of folklore to include the processes by which these items are produced. At the present day, folklorists study expressive culture using locally-based research methods. The annual meeting of the AFS is the largest single gathering of folklorists in North America, and plays an important role in shaping folkloristics.  

This paper presents some thoughts on research trends in North American folkloristics based on the author’s experience at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Society. The first part of the paper explains some of the important aspects of folkloristics by referring to the leaflet recently published by the AFS. Next, an overview of the 2013 Annual Meeting is presented. It includes a discussion on continuity and change concerning ethical and methodological issues of reflexivity and representation. Further, information gathered through interviews with prominent folklorists demonstrates recent developments in American folkloristics, and their views on these. The latter half of the paper introduces a lecture and discussion panels on the themes of children’s folklore, humor, religion, and spirituality. It also examines the historical background, and explores prospects for further research.  

Key Words: folkloristics, 2013 Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society, research trends